

Message Text

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15

ACTION EA-14

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1944

INFO AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

C O N F I D E N T I A L PEKING 0997

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT CH

SUBJECT: THE WALL POSTER CAMPAIGN - SOME OBSERVATIONS FROM
PEKING

REF: A) PEKING 984 B) PEKING 0990 C) HONG KONG 6793

1. THE FIRST PUBLIC WALL POSTER WHICH APPEARED IN PEKING
AT THE MUNICIPAL REVOLUTIONARY COMMITTEE JUNE 13 NOW HAS
A NUMBER OF COMPANION PIECES, ALL IN THE SAME AREA OF THE
CITY, DRAWING HUNDREDS OF READERS DAILY. FOLLOWING ARE
OUR OBSERVATIONS BASED ON THOSE POSTERS WE HAVE BEEN
ABLE TO READ THUS FAR.

2. FIRST, THE ORIGINAL POSTER WAS PUT UP BY A GROUP OF
OUTS FROM THE PEKING REVOLUTIONARY COMMITTEE. AMONG
THE CHARGES LEVELED AGAINST THE LEADERSHIP OF THE
COMMITTEE WAS THAT IT HAD PROMPTLY ABANDONED THE PRINCIPLES
OF THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION AFTER ITS FOUNDING IN 1967, HAD
TURNED ITS BACK ON THE "THREE WAY COMBINATIONS" OF YOUNG,
MIDDLE-AGED AND OLD, AND WORKERS, CADRE AND ARMY. IT IS
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CLAIMED THAT ELEMENTS ON THE STANDING COMMITTEE SUPPRESSED

THESE ELEMENTS IN THE LEADERSHIP, MANY OF THEM RED GUARDS, WHO HAD EMERGED DURING THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION, AND APPEARANCES FROM AMONG THIS GROUP TEND TO SUPPORT THIS CONTENTION. THE POSTER ALSO CHARGES THAT EARLIER ATTEMPTS TO PUT UP BIG CHARACTER POSTERS EXPRESSING THEIR GRIEVANCES HAD BEEN SUPPRESSED BY THE PEKING REVOLUTIONARY COMMITTEE, AND THE POLICE HAD BEEN USED TO TEAR THEM DOWN AND HARASS THOSE IN OPPOSITION. SOMETHING HAPPENED RECENTLY TO CHANGE THAT SITUATION, QUITE POSSIBLY THE PROMULGATION OF CENTRAL COMMITTEE DIRECTIVE NUMBER EIGHTEEN.

3. SECOND, IT SEEMS LIKELY THAT THE OBJECT OF THE POSTER ATTACK IN PEKING IS WU TEH, CHAIRMAN OF THE REVOLUTIONARY COMMITTEE AND A POLITBURO MEMBER, THUS BRINGING THE CONTROVERSY INTO THE HIGHEST REALSM OF STATE POLITICAL POWER. POSTERS WHICH WENT UP OVER THE WEEKEND ALSO ATTACK HUNAN FIRST SECRETARY KUA KUO-FENG, ANOTHER MEMBER OF THE POLITBURO. (WE HAVE JUST LEARNED THAT THOSE ATTACKING HUA WERE TORN DOWN SUNDAY NIGHT.) THE CHARGES IN BOTH CASES WERE SIMILAR, I.E. SUPPRESSING THE RESULTS OF THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION, TRYING TO CHECK THE CAMPAIGN TO CRITICIZE LIN PIAO AND CONFUCIUS, AND OPERATING IN A HIGH HANDED MANNER IGNORING THOSE WHO BECAME PART OF THE LEADERSHIP AS A RESULT OF THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION. IN THIS RESPECT, IT IS INTERESTING TO NOTE THAT WANG HUNG-WEN IS A MAJOR SUBJECT IN THE POSTERS, AND ONE OF THE CHARGES LEVELED AGAINST THOSE UNDER ATTACK IN PEKING IS THAT OF IGNORING WANG'S REPORT ON THE PARTY CONSTITUTION WHILE STUDYING DOCUMENTS WRITTEN BY ONE COMRADE XX.

4. THIRD, THE READINGS WE ARE GETTING FROM ELEMENTS IN THE LEADERSHIP, FROM YAO WEN-YAUN ON THE LEFT TO CHIAO KUAN-HUA ON THE RIGHT, ALL FOCUS ON THE VIEW THAT THE CAMPAIGN REMAINS UNDER CONTROL AND IS PROCEEDING ACCORDING TO PLAN. THIS MAY BE WISHFUL THINKING OR SIMPLY REASSURANCES FOR FOREIGNERS, BUT WE ARE INCLINED TO ACCEPT YAO'S STATEMENT THAT THE CAMPAIGN HAS A LONG WAY TO GO AND CHINA'S LEADERSHIP MAY BE PREOCCUPIED WITH INTERNAL POLITICAL QUESTIONS THROUGHOUT THE LATTER HALF OF 1974. FOR WHAT IT IS WORTH, WE MIGHT ADD OUR FEELING THAT WE SHOULD BE CAUTIOUS IN CONFIDENTIAL

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ASSUMING THAT SIMPLY BECAUSE A FIGURE COMES UNDER ATTACK IN THE POSTERS HE IS ON HIS WAY TO BEING PURGED. THERE MAY BE SOMETHING TO THE "MASS DEMOCRACY" LINE BEING PASSED OUT TO FOREIGNERS CONCERNING INDIVIDUALS WHOSE NAMES APPEAR IN THE POSTERS, ALTHOUGH IN CHINA THIS IS A DICEY GAME INDEED.

5. FOURTH, ALTHOUGH THIS NEW PHASE IN THE MOVEMENT IS OBVIOUSLY NOT SIMPLY AN EXERCISE FOR FOREIGN CONSUMPTION,

WE HAVE BEEN STRUCK BY THE RELAXED ATTITUDE TOWARD FOREIGN OBSERVATION. WHEREAS ONLY A FEW WEEKS AGO FOREIGNERS WERE CAUTIONED REPEATEDLY AGAINST PHOTOGRAPHING BIG CHARACTER POSTERS, THE CROWDS NOW MAKE WAY FOR FOREIGN NEWSMEN TO TAKE PICTURES OF THE POSTERS OUTSIDE THE REVOLUTIONARY COMMITTEE HEADQUARTERS. (USLO AND MOST EMBASSIES, HOWEVER, HAVE NOT PHOTOGRAPHED POSTERS AND WE DO NOT PLAN TO.) POLICE DIRECT PARKING FOR FOREIGN CARS, AND LOCAL INTERPRETERS ACCOMPANY THEIR EMPLOYERS TO INTERPRET THE OFTEN DIFFICULT HANDWRITING. (WE HAVE HEARD THAT SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONS HAVE BEEN GIVEN TO THEM TO BE HELPFUL TO WESTERNERS.) IN AT LEAST TWO CASES, IN HARBIN AND KUNMING, POSTERS ATTACKING PROVINCIAL REVOLUTIONARY COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN HAVE BEEN PUT UP AFTER A HIGH LEVEL VISITING DELEGATION ARRIVED. SOME PEKING OBSERVERS SPECULATE THAT THE LEADERSHIP HAS DECIDED THAT TO TRY AND PREVENT FOREIGNERS FROM READING THE POSTERS WOULD SIMPLY INCREASE SPECULATION AND PREDICTIONS OF CULTURAL REVOLUTION STYLE UPHEAVALS. THIS CLEARLY IS PART OF IT, ALTHOUGH WE ARE INCLINED TO BELIEVE THAT THERE ARE THOSE WITHIN THE LEADERSHIP WHO WANT THE STORY TO REACH THE OUTSIDE.

6. FINALLY, SOME OBSERVATIONS OF MAN-ON-THE-STREET REACTIONS MIGHT BE USEFUL. STANDING AMONG THE HUNDREDS WHO LINE UP IN FRONT OF THE POSTERS ON HOT JUNE DAYS FROM MORNING UNTIL WELL INTO THE EVENING, WE GET THE IMPRESSION OF INTENSE INTEREST BUT CONSIDERABLE RESERVE. THERE IS NO EXCITEMENT OR ENTHUSIASM. RATHER, EACH PERSON SEEMS TO BE MAKING HIS OWN CALCULATION OF THE IMPLICATIONS FOR HIM OF THIS NEW TURN OF EVENTS. THERE IS ABUNDANT CURIOSITY ABOUT THE FOREIGNERS WHO STAND IN FRONT OF THE POSTERS AND APPEAR TO BE ABLE TO READ THEM, BUT THE XENOPHOBIA WE HAVE WITNESSED RECENTLY WHEN FOREIGNERS POKED THEIR NOSES IN PLACES WHERE STREET COMMITTEES FELT

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THEY DIDN'T BELONG IS THUS FAR MISSING.
HOLDRIDGE

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